Bringing Research to LIFE

In brief

2011 Cordwood Conference & Northern Climates Alternative Building Design Day

University of Manitoba
June 11-12

Held approximately every five years, The Continental Cordwood Conference CoCoCo2011 celebrates the building technique known as Cordwood Masonry or Stackwall. This alternative building method uses log ends that are mortared to form a wall system that resembles a stack of firewood with mortar in between.

The Northern Climates Alternative Building Design Day is an annual event that focuses on various aspects of sustainable building and design. This year the theme will be "Building Naturally", and there will be presentations, tour of the Alternative Village and hands-on activities.

For more information on either event, please visit:

http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/engineering/departments/design/alternative_village/CoCoCo.html

Important Reminder

For Researchers and Research Coordinators

Continuing Approval/ Annual approval

We would like to remind all sites of their responsibility to ensure continuing approval is obtained by the expiry date noted on either the initial or annual certificate of ethical approval.

Over the past couple of months the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Boards(REB)have noted that funding agencies and regulatory bodies are enforcing annual approval dates by suspending study activities and suggesting that data collected during lapse in approval will not be used in data analysis.

Unfortunately, the REBs are unable to grant retrospective approval for lapses in approval. Therefore, it is imperative that the research sites submit a hard copy of the annual study status report along with the consent forms presently in use for review within 3-4 weeks of the expiry date noted on the initial certificate of approval or last annual approval certificate.

Thank-you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact Lynne Wichenko at 789-3255 or Shelly Rempel-Rossum at 789-3389.

A Question of Ethics

BY JOHN RYMON

Photo by Daniel Gwozdz

Research Quality Assurance Manager Monica Woods assists researchers with the issues of human ethics.

Wanting to know more about ourselves and the world around us is part of human nature. Research is a natural extension of this desire for greater understanding and can take many forms.

Significant advances in medicine, the workings of the human body, human interactions and countless other areas have been made as a result of research involving humans themselves. However, with this method of research comes a responsibility to respect and protect the participants, as well as to employ rigorous analysis, disseminate research results, and ensure high scientific and ethical standards throughout.

The University of Manitoba's Human Ethics Resource Committee (HERC) is well-equipped to protect human research subjects. For the past year, HERC has been providing oversight and facilitating effective communication between members of the research community and their respective Research Ethics Boards (REBs). The committee consists of the chairs from each of the university's five REBs, a representative of the Research Quality Management (RQM) office, and the associate vice-president (research). Any research projects involving humans and conducted by University of Manitoba researchers require prior ethics review and approval by an REB.

Ruth Ann Marrie, an associate professor of internal medicine and community health sciences, focuses on the various aspects of the epidemiology of Multiple Sclerosis in her research. "Every institution has a slightly different approach. Most of what I do is epidemiological research, and I use clinical and health claims data," says Marrie. "The REB [I work with] is careful about how clinicians interact with their patients for research, but they'll work with you to accomplish the research while respecting human ethics guidelines."

In 1998, Canada's three federal granting agencies – CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC – developed the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) for the "Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans." Although no single document can provide definitive answers to all ethical issues that may arise during complex studies, TCPS is based on three core principles of respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice.

The Tuskegee Study of Untreated syphilis is a commonly-referenced incident of unethical research. Conducted from 1932-1972 by the U.S. Public Health Service, hundreds of low-income African-American males exposed to syphilis were deceived and denied treatment, even after penicillin became available as an effective treatment in the 1950s.

Closer to home, the Association of Manitoba Chiefs' website highlights an incident in which leftover portions of blood samples from a First Nations community were used for secondary research without consent. The OCAP principles addressing collective privacy rights of Canadian First Nations Communities state that a community has the right to own and control any personal information or data collected about the people in that community, although these principles were ignored in this case.

Since research is a step into the unknown, there is always an element of risk involved. However, such occurrences of unethical research can be prevented by employing responsible guidelines.

In addition to using TCPS as a primary reference, HERC has taken extra steps to ensure a standard of education amongst its researchers by requiring completion of an online tutorial as part of the approval process. The Course of Research Ethics (CORE) is the new standard requirement for researchers submitting proposals for planned studies or data for publication. "The REBs needed some way of ensuring that the researchers were all receiving the same information," says Monica Woods, research quality assurance manager. "Education through engagement is something that the CHRPP and CORE tutorials strive to deliver."

CORE is the soon-to-be-released version of the older Course in Human Research Protection Program (CHRPP), and set to become the new standard with strict guidelines for completion. According to Woods, "Researchers need to complete CORE or CHRPP by September 1, 2011 for any new research. Approvals are annual so you can't use research data that's been collected after the expiry date, and the REBs can't grant retrospective approvals or allow any lapses."

Marrie is no stranger to ethics tutorials, having completed the CHRPP and several similar programs over the course of her research. "Many of these tutorials share several common elements and the modules provide an opportunity to review some of the basic principles of research ethics," she says.

Christina Lengyel is an assistant professor of human nutritional sciences, and also sees the value in the tutorials. "Any grad or undergrad student working in a research capacity should take the tutorials," she says. "They bring you up to speed and inform you of the guidelines."

Researchers who have recently completed the CHRPP tutorial will not be asked to complete the CORE tutorial.

Serving the legitimate requirements of research needs to be balanced with the necessary protection and ethical conduct. Maintaining a process of ongoing informed consent will lead to shared benefits, and maintain the trust of both participants and the public in the research process.

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